

There are other things we would like to do. One of them is the competitiveness bill, which is very important. It is such an interesting piece of legislation. In conversations with the most liberal members of my caucus, I find that they love this piece of legislation, as do moderates and conservatives in my caucus, and it is the same with the Republicans. They think this legislation is very good.

I see my friend from Tennessee on the floor who worked with Senator BINGAMAN on this early on. I hope we can do this before we leave. It is my understanding that the conference, if not completed, is virtually completed. It would be good to do that before we leave. It would show real bipartisan-ship.

Mr. DORGAN. Will the Senator yield for a question?

Mr. REID. Yes.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I know others are waiting to begin morning business. Let me first add my hope with the majority leader that we will be able to move through these bills with some expeditious action this week. There has been so much delay in the Chamber. I know the majority leader wishes to move through and get these things done. I hope we can do that.

I want to mention to the Senator from Nevada that I have offered to the children's health insurance bill the Indian Health Care Improvement Act. I did that yesterday as an amendment. There are 3 million children benefitted by the children's health insurance bill, but there are 2 million American Indians who are subject to full-scale health care rationing. It is unbelievable what is happening.

We have had 11 separate bills introduced in the Congress since the authorization for the Indian Health Care Improvement Act expired some years ago, and none of them have moved. So I offered the amendment because I felt I had to do it to the Children's Health Insurance Program that is on the floor.

I indicated yesterday, however, in response to Senator BAUCUS, who said that he would mark up on September 12 in the Finance Committee the portions of the bill relevant to them, I indicated I would withdraw my amendment from the children's health bill if I could get a commitment to get the Indian health care bill to the floor of the Senate. I have already marked up the Indian health bill in the Indian Affairs Committee, my committee.

This is urgent. We have a problem with respect to rationing of health care with American Indians. I ask my colleague—and I know we have visited about it, and I know how strongly he supports American Indians and health care for them—can we have a commitment to get the Indian health bill to the floor of the Senate? If we can do that, I will withdraw my amendment here in anticipation of having that debate on Indian health in the next couple of months in the Senate.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I say to my friend, the distinguished chairman of the Indian Affairs Committee, a tireless advocate for Native Americans his entire career, I have 22 different tribal organizations in the State of Nevada. You say "rationing" health care. I think that is even being too generous because there is no health care rationed, in many instances, in Nevada. We have gone from having two wonderful hospitals for Native Americans and now we have one that is closed. The other they don't use for acute care. It is a situation that, for our country, should be an embarrassment. It is an embarrassment. People just don't know how bad it is.

I say to my friend, through the Chair, that we are going to do this bill this year. If it is reported out of the Finance Committee, we will find a way to bring it to the floor. It is the right thing to do. We talk about people who don't have advocates for them. My tribal organizations in Nevada don't have people back here advocating for them. We need to advocate for them. I have to do that, especially on this issue of health care. They deserve the basic minimum; they deserve the ability to have some kind of health care. It is in such a state now that I, frankly, don't know what to tell the tribal organizations when they come to see me. There has been more than a decade waiting to do something about this.

So I support my friend from North Dakota and will do everything I can to move this forward and make a commitment that we will do something this session of Congress.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, that commitment of the majority leader is welcome. I observe this: There are few places in this country where someone having a heart attack would be wheeled into an emergency room with a piece of paper attached to their thigh by masking tape that says:

To the hospital: By the way, if you admit this woman, understand you are on your own because contract health care from the Indian Health Service has run out.

Very few places in this country will you see that. It describes how unbelievably urgent it is to pass this bill. The commitment from the majority leader is very welcome. It reflects his long-term commitment to deal with Indian issues.

The commitment from Senator BAUCUS to mark up his portion of the bill on September 12 is welcome. Therefore, when we are back on the children's health bill, I will withdraw my amendment as a result of the commitment to move it separately.

I yield the floor.

#### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, leadership time is reserved.

#### MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there

will now be a period for the transaction of morning business for 30 minutes, under the control of the Republican leader or his designee, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The Senator from Tennessee is recognized.

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, will the Chair let me know when 6 minutes has expired?

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Chair will so inform the Senator.

#### NOMINATION OF JUDGE LESLIE SOUTHWICK

Mr. ALEXANDER. Mr. President, when I was first elected to the Senate in 2002, I recognized the so-called maiden speech tradition, and I came here expecting to talk about U.S. history. I was so disappointed by the debate that I found going on in February of 2003 about the President's appointment of Miguel Estrada to the Supreme Court that I spoke for a long time one night about the unfairness that I felt about that. I thought he was a superbly qualified individual and that a case was being manufactured against him to try to prevent an up-or-down vote.

Then, along came the nomination of Judge Charles Pickering, of Mississippi, who in the 1950s and 1960s, while others were making speeches about civil rights, was living it out in the middle of Mississippi, testifying against someone who was described as the "most violent living racist" in Mississippi and putting his children into desegregated schools at a time when others weren't. There was a manufactured, unfair case against him.

The Senate came to its senses shortly thereafter and began to develop a procedure where judges could get an up-or-down vote, which brings me to the matter of Judge Leslie Southwick, of Mississippi, whom the President has nominated to serve on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit—the same position for which Judge Pickering was nominated. Yet, despite his excellent qualifications, his nomination has not been reported to the floor by the Judiciary Committee for a fair up-or-down vote. It seems that Judge Southwick may be the first target in a new round of character assassination by some in this body.

That seat has been vacant for 6 years. This is one of the most important courts in America. I was a law clerk on that court—actually a messenger, but I was treated like a law clerk—to the great Judge John Minor Wisdom, who served with Judge Tuttle, Judge Rives, and Judge Brown, all of whom presided over the segregation of the South. I value that court and the quality of judges who have been there.

Judge Southwick has that same quality. He has 11 years of service as a Mississippi State appellate court judge. He had military service in Iraq as a staff judge advocate. He has been a professor